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THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

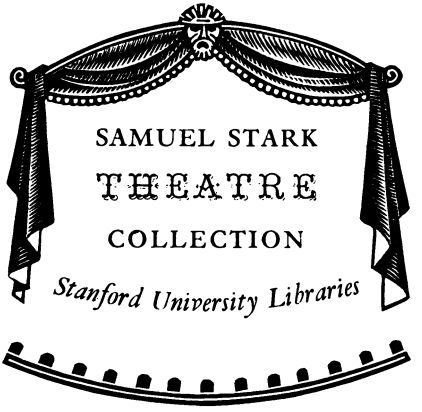
MADRETTA

AT THE SHRINE

ADDIO

BY

STARK YOUNG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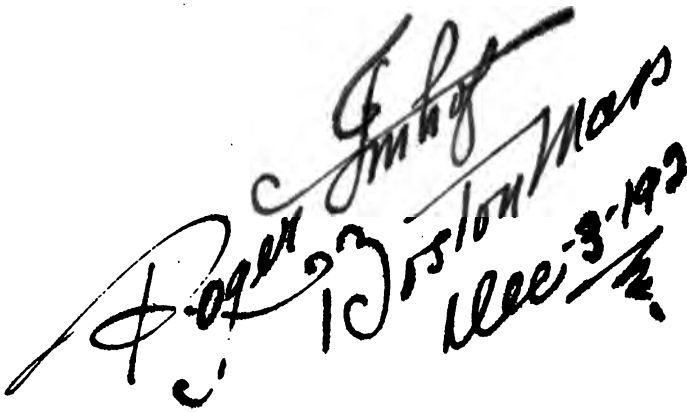

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THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

MADRETTA AT THE SHRINE
ADDIO

By

STARK YOUNG

CINCINNATI
STEWART KIDD COMPANY
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To
Edith and Lewis Isaacs

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MADRETTA

CHARACTERS

SIMON, *a foreman on the levee, twenty-four years old. The two others give a French pronunciation to his name.*

JEAN MARI, *a Creole, seller of lottery tickets.*

NANI, *a young Creole, wife of Simon.*

MADRETTA

Nani stands on the step outside the doorway, with a flower in the hand that hangs dejectedly at her side. Beyond her, and past the shadow of the house, the morning sun shines brightly on the grass and trees and down the path leading west to the levee and the Mississippi.

Inside the room, between the door and the north wall stands a keg with scalloped green paper and candles in bottles. Above is a picture of the Madonna, with a crucifix fastened to the plaster higher up. Near the keg a cot bed runs forward in a diagonal position to the sides of the room. In the nearby corner a cupboard with an old curtain stands.

There are some green boughs across the fireplace in the south wall, and a mirror and household odds and ends on the mantelpiece. A slant ray of sunlight strikes through the drab red curtains of a window near. Outside the birds are heard singing in the trees.

Presently Nani half throws, half drops the flower into the grass outside, and turns and comes into the room, and walks slowly toward the bed. She kneels and takes from under the bed a box of toys. She lifts them one by one and looks at them, shaking her head. Then she crosses the room to a chair near the fireplace, with one of the toys hanging limply in her hand.

She sits, looking at the toy as if it were a child.

NANI

Pierre, petit Pierre—mamie! (*Singing*) Rock-a-bye, baby, in the treetop, when the wind blows the cradle—the cradle— (*She is choked with sobs.*) Ah, non, non! Ça ne me fait rien—il me faut oublier. (*She drops the toy and makes an effort to change her mood. Singing brightly*) Il pleut, bergère—non, non, I cannot. (*She goes slowly over to the Madonna near the door*) Madonna, Madonna, hear me—you had a child, too, Madonna. (*She lights the candles and leans against the wall, looking down at them, her cheek against her two hands. Then in the distance is heard Jean Mari's voice singing gaily. Madretta hears. She lifts her head, listening to the nearing voice. She suddenly blows out the candles and stands with her hands pressed to her breast, her eyes wide with excitement.*

NANI

O Jesus—Jean Mari! (*She runs out. The song breaks off, and presently they enter together. The flower that she has thrown away is in her hair now. Jean Mari carries a sheet of pink paper in his hand.*)

JEAN MARI

And you hear me sing?

NANI

Yais, oh, yais! It was our song you singing. Il pleut, bergère— (*He stands looking at her with his hands stretched out toward her, and begins the song again. Soon she joins in, and for a moment they stand like happy children; then*

she puts it from her) Oh, non! Simon, my husband, he never sings.

JEAN MARI

Never sings. Not he. He is the Yankee; he works. And he is old.

NANI

Oh, mais, non! Simon's not old. He is not older than you are, Jean Mari; but then he never sings.

JEAN MARI

He works; he works.

NANI

Yais, Simon works. At home we never worked. Not much we worked, yais (*almost sullenly*). But I think I sing more then maybe than now.

JEAN MARI

In Nouvelle Orleans?

NANI

Oui, yais, Nouvelle Orleans, before I married Simon.

JEAN MARI

Oh, Nani, if I had found you then!

NANI

If you had—yais, before, yais, before. I would not have cried so much then, because I might have stayed in Nouvelle Orleans.

JEAN MARI

Yes, you might have stayed in Nouvelle Orleans. We'd have been happy, Nani.

NANI

Think so? Yais, maybe, before, before, before I married Simon—and the baby was born, and

we came here—and this damn swamp killed my child—my lil Pierre.

JEAN MARI

(*Turning away from her and half showing his impatience with her tears*) Non, non—

NANI

And then I cry toujours, always. I can no thing but crying. And Simon, the man, he maybe forget soon—I don't know—he say so lil bit, so lil bit, Simon does. He say "Madretta" —he heard the Dagoes say that—it means (*she almost sobs again at the irony of the word now*) lil mother—Simon say (*she takes his voice*) "Madretta, you cry your heart out. Leave the cryin'; it's na good."

JEAN MARI

But I was sorry for you.

NANI

(*Nodding*) Yais, and sat with me in the long daytime when Simon had gone to the work with the men up yonder on the river. (*A pause*) You love me, hey?

JEAN MARI

Love you? Ah, Nani! I have brought you these beads, Nani. (*He takes out a string of coral beads. She holds them up before her eyes, then clasps them on with childish delight.*)

JEAN MARI

Love you—love you, Nani!

NANI

But we must not talk that. Simon he never talks of you.

JEAN MARI

Simon, he likes me not.

NANI

I don't know—maybe—Simon I think he is sick a lil. But he say nothing. He works hard and saves the money.

JEAN MARI

He is miser, Simon is. Diable—

NANI

I don' know 'bout that, Jean Mari. He never beats me 'bout the money as my father he used to do. Ah, non, ciel— (*She catches sight of herself in the glass on the mantelpiece, and breaks into a little laugh*) That flower is pretty—jolie—

JEAN MARI

Pretty on Nani, yes!

NANI

Yais, am I pretty? (*She looks away from the mirror and changes her tone before she speaks again*) Am I pretty? I don' know. Simon told me so before we were married. (*She turns and walks toward the door, and stands looking neither in nor out*) Jolie! Who is here to say that? No one is ever in this swamp to look at me. Here's nothing. Nothing but the trees and the wind—they are all. The wind in the trees makes me afraid. And when I hear the birds—when I hear them—I cry for my baby.

JEAN MARI

Simon could tell you if he would. Do you love him, Nani?

NANI

I don' know, Jean! He is most kind, and never quarrels. He brought me the cross there, see, over the Blessed Virgin. Le's not talk 'bout that. What is the papier, Jean Mari?

JEAN MARI

The steamer, Kate Adams.

NANI

Where?

JEAN MARI

Nouvelle Orleans.

NANI

Ah non? (*Eagerly*) When?

JEAN MARI

In one hour. (*Looking at his watch*) Ten o'clock, it says. In half an hour. (*She goes to the door and stands looking out, raises one hand and drops it.*)

JEAN MARI

(*Trying to recall her to the moment*) Nani! Nani—

NANI

(*In a dull, mechanical voice*) Yais, Jean Mari—

JEAN MARI

Nouvelle Orleans, Nani!

NANI

Yais, I understand. Nouvelle Orleans.

JEAN MARI

Where you have been crying to go, Nani; and Simon will not go.

NANI

(*Coming back into the room, despairingly*) Yais, Simon, he will not go.

JEAN MARI

Nani—

NANI

Yais—

JEAN MARI

(*Starting toward her*) I will take you, Nani! I will take you! I love you, Nani. More than your wood Yankee does. (*He comes close to her; she struggles with herself against the temptation to yield to his offer.*)

NANI

Non, Jean Mari, non, ah—non!

JEAN MARI

Mais, oui, but yes! Nouvelle Orleans! (*She stands looking off into space. He plunges his hand into his pocket*) See, I have the money here!

NANI

(*Catching sight of the money that will bring her to New Orleans*) Eh, bien—

JEAN MARI

The children and the music in the street—the blessed mass, we'll sing all day—what is there here, Nani?

NANI

Here?

JEAN MARI

Oui, yes, here?

NANI

(*Slowly, half under her breath*) Simon, he is here.

JEAN MARI

Ah, the Yankee; he is the ox.

NANI

He has been kind to me. Maybe—

JEAN MARI

Nani, the girls and the boys! Suzanne and Desirée, and the piano in the park at night. You can do it all, quick—

NANI

(*With a dull shudder of almost animal fear*) He might come back here before the hour, might Simon. He will kill me!

JEAN MARI

He comes not ever back till night. The work needs him. You know what the water is doing, the overflow?

NANI

The overflow?

JEAN MARI

Yes, you know he's got to be with the levee, or what may happen! The whole river would come on us. He never comes back till dark. (*Suddenly*) He *shall* not come. (*She is irresolute. He leans toward her, nearer. She turns away a step.*)

JEAN MARI

He'll never find you in the city. He will not search.

NANI

Maybe he will not search—I don' know—maybe he will be glad if I go. I go with you—to Nouvelle Orleans. (*He starts toward her, passionately*) Non, non, Jean Mari, non. Leave—(*He draws nearer her, snatches up her hand, and kisses it*) Leave me to fix. Don't touch me. Leave me to fix.

JEAN MARI

Not long then. (*He lifts her hand again to his lips; she seems unaware of his action and stands looking into space*) Not long?

NANI

Not long, yais. (*He goes out, looking back at her as he passes through the doorway, and passes out. She stands without turning, still looking into space. Then she breaks out with a little cry.*)

NANI

Ah, Nouvelle Orleans, Nouvelle Orleans! (*She rushes to the cupboard in the corner, opening out drawers and throwing various objects uppermost. Among them appears a great red shawl. Suddenly she leaves her packing as she shakes out the shawl and throws it round her, Carmen-wise. She throws up her head as she stands wrapped in the splendid crimson. Then all of a sudden a halloa comes from the direction of the river; then a pistol shot, followed by another. Her body deadens; mechanically she draws the shawl off her shoulder and drops it across the bed. Simon stumbles into the door and leans against the wall.*)

NANI

(*Looking at him in terror*) Simon!

SIMON

Nani, quick!

NANI

Simon, are you hurt? (*He takes his hand from within his coat and holds it out toward her. She sees the blood on the palm.*)

NANI

But who—who?

SIMON

Oh, I don't know; it's no matter who.

NANI

Oh, Dieu!

SIMON

Help me, Madretta, to the bed there! (*With his arm about her shoulder she leads him to the bed. He sinks down on it with his feet to the door. He lies for a moment exhausted*) Little Madretta —oh, give me some wine, woman! (*She runs across the room and comes back with the wine from the mantelpiece.*)

NANI

Let me call someone! Let me go for a doctor!

SIMON

No, no, no; you couldn't get him here in time. Sit by me, Madretta.

NANI

You bleed?

SIMON

Inside, I think—it trickles and strangles sort'o.

It won't be long. (*He sinks back on his pillow. In the silence that follows she has a chance to remember the unusual time for Simon's quitting work and that he might never have been hurt at the usual hour for his return. He raises his head; she gives him more wine.*)

NANI

You come home soon to-day?

SIMON

Yes, that's right. And I ran—ran—

NANI

Ran?

SIMON

Listen, Madretta, let me speak while I can. That lottery fellow from New Orleans, Jean Mari—

NANI

(*Under her breath*) Jean Mari!

SIMON

Yes, Jean Mari. He's been selling liquor to the men in my gang. He's the cause of all this. I couldn't—get—the—work done—in time—in time—oh—

NANI

Are you easy now, lying so?

SIMON

Raise my head—now—

NANI

Oui, so.

SIMON

The levee bank is broke above. They say it

will sweep all this place away; I could hear it comin'.

NANI

(*She leaps up in terror and runs to the door and looks out for a second, then shuts it to and bolts it.*)

SIMON

They say there is a boat—a boat comin'—I came to save you— (*She stops on her way from the door.*)

NANI

Yais, to save me—

SIMON

Yes, to save you. And when I got to the cattle-pen out there, somebody called and then shot— (*He coughs blood. She comes a few steps nearer, then stands looking down at him.*)

NANI

Yais, to save me. Maybe you love me, then—

SIMON

Love you? Oh, Madretta!

NANI

You never say so.

SIMON

Don't you know me yet? I never say such things, Madretta. (*She falls on her knees by the bed.*)

NANI

Don' die! Don' die! See, it don' bleed now!

SIMON

In here—in here—I feel it settling. (*He puts*

his arms round her neck) Little Madretta—Nani, I'm so sleepy—maybe I'd better go to sleep. (*She stands on her knees and looks at him as he sleeps. The whistle of a steamboat is heard in the distance. Simon talks in a sort of delirium*) My lil son, and little Madretta—that's sweet—little mother—my lil son is dead—but I mus' not be cryin'—that makes it harder for us all. I—I can—when I'm away—when I'm workin' in the day. We must save money. If I have money enough to—leave this damned swamp—New Year—maybe in the spring that levee will break and ruin us—New Year—New Year we'll go—I'll not tell her, though. Because—if—if—we really didn't go—why—Nani—Nani, are you there?

NANI

Yais, yais.

SIMON

(*Changing his tone*) It's no use to cry, woman! It won't bring the baby back, nor put us in New Orleans. (*Changing back to his first tone*) There—poor lil mother! Nani, where are the candles? It's dark in this corner, Nani!

NANI

Yais.

SIMON

Madretta, light the candles. (*She lights the candles in a blind sort of fashion.*)

NANI

Now you see, do you?

SIMON

A little. (*He is silent for a while, then suddenly sits up*) Here, baby, come here. Call him, Madretta! He's afraid of the blood. Pierre! Call him, mother. (*She follows his gaze eagerly over towards the fireplace, lost in her hunger for the child's sight.*)

NANI

Where? (*She comes suddenly to herself and drops down to her place beside the bed*) Oh, hush, Simon, hush! (*He lies back.*)

SIMON

Good-night, baby Pierre. Madretta—

NANI

I hear you, yais—

SIMON

Madretta, don't leave me—you're all I have left—you are—all I—have. Reach me your hand. It's dark—and I'm tired. (*He seems to sleep.*)

NANI

Yais, I'm here, Simon; I won't leave you—I won't, Simon. (*A silence for a moment. Then a knock comes at the door, and Jean Mari's voice outside.*)

JEAN MARI

Nani, Nani— (*No answer. He knocks again.*)

JEAN MARI

Nani—come, Nani—

NANI

(*Mechanically*) Jean Mari—

JEAN MARI

He can't hurt you. I shot him to keep him away. He's in the woods somewhere. You are safe—open the door! Open the door— (*The whistle of the boat is heard. Jean Mari begins to shake the door.*)

JEAN MARI

Nani, Nani—the boat is stopping up yonder—it's coming now—we'll be home to-morrow—in Nouvelle Orleans—

NANI

(*Nodding her head, numbly*) Nouvelle Orleans. (*She looks at Simon, who, as far as one could tell, is dead. She is afraid of him as he lies there. She rises. She starts toward the door, passing her open hand along the wall, as if half blind.*)

JEAN MARI

(*Outside*) Nani, quick, Nani—

NANI

I hear you. (*Suddenly her blind hand strikes the crucifix on the wall; it falls before her. She recoils from it in terror, throwing up her head and putting her hand over her eyes. The boat on the river whistles twice. The bells sound.*)

JEAN MARI

Nani, don't be afraid; come—(*The bells sound. She takes two steps toward the door, then a step back toward the bed. Simon stirs and tries to raise his head.*)

SIMON

Madretta—are you—there? You're all I have, Madretta— (*Jean Mari shakes the door.*)

SIMON

Madretta— (*She stands by the foot of the bed. Her eyes blaze and her bosom heaves.*)

NANI

Yais, Simon.

JEAN MARI

(*Outside*) Will you come, Nani? Damn you, are you comin' or not? (*Her hands at her breast find the beads. She tears them from her throat and hurls them at the door. They rattle over the boards of the floor.*)

NANI

Non, non, I will not.

SIMON

Madretta— (*The whistle and bells sound farther and farther off. The noise of the flood, with the cracking of the timber grows gradually louder. Nani hears it from behind her as she stands, and cries out in terror.*)

NANI

Simon, Simon, Simon, the water!

SIMON

(*Almost asleep*) Madretta— (*She comes back to the bed, walking like a stunned thing, and falls on her knees by him.*)

SIMON

(*Feeling for her hand*) Little Madretta—

NANI

I am with you.

(*The flood roars outside.*)

CURTAIN

AT THE SHRINE

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CHARACTERS

ANN

A PRIEST

AT THE SHRINE

It is a winter evening toward eight o'clock. In the old-fashioned house that has seen better days the windows on either side of the doorway are dark. One step, with little iron hand-rails at the sides, joins the house to the pavement. A street lamp shines down through its dusty glass; and in the dull light Ann, almost at her door, turns and sees the priest.

ANN

Good-evening.

THE PRIEST

(*Taking no notice of her insinuating manner*) Good-evening. (*She lays her hand on his arm familiarly.*)

ANN

How's Father?

THE PRIEST

(*Quietly, without removing her hand*) Quite well, thank you.

ANN

This *is* an honor. Will you come in?

THE PRIEST

No, thank you. (*She takes her hand away, somewhat puzzled.*)

ANN

No?

THE PRIEST

I'll just stop here.

ANN

No chances taken I suppose!

THE PRIEST

I beg pardon?

ANN

I said you'd take no chances. It wouldn't do now for a holy man to be seen with— (*He remonstrates with a movement of his hand.*)

ANN

The very subject pains you.

THE PRIEST

I merely wanted a few words.

ANN

You'll just do your duty, then, and give me my chance to be saved. Open-air services? And do you think it can be done in a few words? And one priest unaided? And in a jiffy? Wouldn't it have been better, now, if you had brought along one of those ladies who tinkle about virtue, Father, to save us poor girls? Or one of the young ladies that love to go about with young clergymen and priests, slumming, with their furs and pretty sympathies? There was one of them came to the Casino the other night. I was sitting at a table waiting for a friend of mine. "Dear girl," she said to me sort of cooing, "don't you want God to love you?" "What is your opinion?" said I; "is God a personality or only a sort of mind in the universe?" She looked stunned; then she answered solemnly, "God is love." "Well," said I, "speaking professionally, I doubt that." But then, Father, she was a Protestant goose.

THE PRIEST
Yes?

ANN
You see I read Bernard Shaw and—but you don't read these books, do you, Father?

THE PRIEST
Certainly not. I condemn them.

ANN
Well, if you had, instead of getting my number out of the book of the saints, we might get on.

THE PRIEST
(*Perplexed and astonished at her way of speaking*) My purpose in coming—

ANN
Not one whiff? Pas de l'amour and no salvation? Then I can't imagine. Will you excuse me half a moment first?

THE PRIEST
Certainly. You are sure I'm not detaining you?

ANN
(*Looking at him incredulously, then beginning to mimic his voice*) Don't speak of it. (*She goes in, leaving the door half open. The light in the room to the right is turned on. Then she returns to the doorstep and takes up the challenge.*)

ANN
Well?

THE PRIEST
Really, I shall not be keeping you. There is no need for the light.

ANN

It was not for you. It was a signal.

THE PRIEST

For your—friends?

ANN

For one of them.

THE PRIEST

Slowly. Is that one Frederick Johns?

ANN

(*She keeps her hold on herself with difficulty*) Well, what if it were?

THE PRIEST

He is my nephew. My name is Henry Stevens. Father Stevens.

ANN

(*Checking a movement of recognition*) Indeed! *Sneeringly.* Did you track him here?

THE PRIEST

No; I asked him where you lived. He had told me of you.

ANN

When?

THE PRIEST

Christmas Eve, a week ago. (*She looks up as if she would speak, but remains silent*) You were going to say?

ANN

Nothing. I was wondering why [illegible] you.

THE PRIEST

It was Christmas Eve. You see, there was a tree.

ANN

(*Puzzled for a moment, then pained*) I see.

THE PRIEST

Christmas Eve. (*He remains silent.*)

ANN

And he told you how long—?

THE PRIEST.

You had known each other? Yes, he tells me two years. He told me a great deal about you.

ANN

(*Recovering her bitter attitude*) Confessing his sins, I suppose. That put you at home, didn't it, Father? A sweet, boyish, clean breast of everything? And you promised to save him from us, now.

THE PRIEST

Is it necessary to be so hard with each other?

ANN

Are priests anything else with my sort?

THE PRIEST

I have come to ask you to give him up.

ANN (*coolly*)

What have I got to do with it? He's free, isn't he?

THE PRIEST

keeping him?

THE PRIEST
You.

ANN
(*Laughs*) I beg pardon. How's that?

THE PRIEST
He loves you.

ANN
(*Looking off into space. Softly*) Yes, he does.

THE PRIEST
I'm sure of it.

ANN
(*Sneering*) And I'm only squeezing him for what's in it. One of that sort?

THE PRIEST
I wouldn't have said that without seeing you first; it would not have been fair. And you love him, do you?

ANN
Why do you ask when you don't in the least care about my part of it?

THE PRIEST
You misjudge me.

ANN
Well, suppose I do? Perhaps we misjudge each other. Haven't you been judging me? Didn't you take me for one of the—girls, then? But I went to college and I read books. How do you know, then, I am not like other women—the women you know? How do you know I don't want a child, don't sit and?—but it's no matter. You think men fancy me only be-

cause— (*He is bewildered at her words. A pause. Then he speaks suddenly.*)

THE PRIEST

Well, if it is not your beauty—your white skin, your red mouth that draws men— (*A pause. She makes no reply.*)

THE PRIEST

Of course, I see now that you are intelligent—perhaps I should say clever; but then men would not follow you for that.

ANN

Father, there is one trouble with you priests.

THE PRIEST

(*Taken aback*) What's that?

ANN

When they confess, people tell you only their sins.

THE PRIEST

Perhaps you're right.

ANN

Do you want to know what draws them?

THE PRIEST

I should like to hear if you will try to tell me.

ANN

It is because they wonder what I really am. They can't make me out. They don't know all of me, and those who come back again and again dream. (*Bitterly again*) But what's that to you?

THE PRIEST

You misjudge me again.

ANN (*sneeringly*)
How should my opinion of you matter?

THE PRIEST
It does matter. And whether you love him.

ANN
I do love him.

THE PRIEST
Then, perhaps, after all—you will give him up—

ANN
Did he ask you to get him off—from his bargain?

THE PRIEST
Not at all. He speaks of you as more sinned against than sinning.

ANN
Which you take, of course, as the same old story—the sympathy game?

THE PRIEST
I had to see you, then, to know what to believe.

ANN (*touched, in a low voice, reacting to his fairness*)
I didn't mean to be rude.

THE PRIEST
And he has told me that you offered to let him go.

ANN
I did—last year.

THE PRIEST
Would you now?

ANN
I don't know—I don't know.

THE PRIEST

It wouldn't be so easy now, would it?

ANN

No; harder. You see, then he was more like other men. But now, you see I need him more now.

THE PRIEST

That't just it, poor child.

ANN

Just what?

THE PRIEST

You know what I mean. It all goes deeper. (*She remains silent*) That's why I'm asking you to break it off now. It will be worse and worse for him—he'll be sinking deeper all the time. (*She straightens herself, but says nothing.*)

THE PRIEST

I didn't mean to hurt you. But you know already all I can say. I beg you to put out that light and let him come and find no one. (*She looks slowly at the window and turns her head away, silent. Then she asks slowly her question.*)

ANN

And what of me, then?

THE PRIEST

That's a question that most women have to ask sooner or later, I believe. I'm a priest.

ANN

It's easy enough to give advice, I suppose.

THE PRIEST

It's hard for you, all this, I know.

ANN

You know what it is to have nobody that cares a rap whether you are alive or dead? And years and years to come yet—but I'll be kissed and bought. (*She turns away from him and puts her hands over her face, for a moment. Then suddenly she turns to him again, sharply*) Oh, don't begin to be soothing. I'm not going to cry. But why shouldn't you be taught something, you priests? Do you know what waiting is? Listening, steps coming, and no one after all, and then—. I put my fingers through his hair—and when he's gone I remember his arm against my face. But you—

THE PRIEST

I am sorry for you. But wouldn't you think you could break it off now as well as later?

ANN

Later?

THE PRIEST

Yes; a week, a year; it's bound to come sometime.

ANN

(*With despair*) Oh, I don't know.

THE PRIEST

He'll come to the time for marrying. He is twenty-four. You are some older, aren't you?

ANN

(*She stiffens and speaks sharply*) I didn't mention my age. Is Fred going to marry someone?

THE PRIEST

But you must have thought of that coming some time.

ANN

Who does Fred want to marry?

THE PRIEST

He hasn't said he would marry anyone. I want him to marry to settle him.

ANN

What sort of a woman is she?

THE PRIEST

Who?

ANN

I suppose you've someone in mind?

THE PRIEST

Yes, I have.

ANN

Oh, if you're not trying to torture me, tell me about her—what is she like?

THE PRIEST

Very gentle and quiet. She will make him a good wife.

ANN

(*Biting her lips*) How nice!

THE PRIEST

And a good mother to his children.

ANN

(*Losing her head*) Good, I suppose. One of your saints. Blond, of course, with a soft face, so very gentle that people want to smack her. That would be a priest's idea of a wife.

THE PRIEST
Not so fast.

ANN
I suppose you priests make job lots of my sort—put us all together? And rich, too, this lady—money helps the saints, doesn't it, Father? And Fred will be a lay brother, and the rich angel—

THE PRIEST
I think I said she was very gentle and quiet, that's all.

ANN
(*Softened*) Yes, you did. Is she beautiful?

THE PRIEST
No more than you are, child.

ANN
Does he love her?

THE PRIEST
He might come to, I think, if—

ANN
If it were not for me?

THE PRIEST
Yes, come to think of it, she looks something like you. Very like. Only you seem—well, stronger, perhaps, to have more—well, life, feeling. Do you know you don't look as I expected, just?

ANN
No? What?

THE PRIEST
I thought you'd be—well, different. A different kind of beauty.

ANN (*She accepts her fate.*)
Yes, I suppose so.

THE PRIEST
(*Pulling himself together*) Come, come now, what can you expect from all this? You and he will never marry. And what's left for you? Nothing, is there?

ANN
I don't know.

THE PRIEST
Even now when you see a woman with her child, what must you think?

ANN
I tell you I mustn't think, that's all.

THE PRIEST
For the man it's one thing, but for you—

ANN
I can't take to-morrow on my hands—that's still to-morrow. And we go on chattering here.

THE PRIEST
(*Somewhat exasperated, and coming back to the mood in which he first entered*) Well, there's one thing that's not of to-morrow that I can't understand. How you go on with the other—patrons—with the other men. It's blasphemy against religion—against what's sacred. You love my nephew, but you have not changed your life.

ANN
I don't know about that.

THE PRIEST

(*Misunderstanding her meaning*) How could you help knowing? You do keep on with the others? Don't you?

ANN

Yes.

THE PRIEST

Then how can you?

ANN

(*Bitterly*) There's no money. I must eat.

THE PRIEST

But how is it possible to keep on so if you love him?

ANN

If it weren't for him I couldn't live.

THE PRIEST

But I fail to see. If it does not change your life—

ANN

(*Looking away, slowly*) It changes me.

THE PRIEST

Forgive me; I'm afraid I didn't understand. (*A silence falls*) Well, say you didn't darken that window, and he comes to-night and finds you. What then? What will he say? What does he say?

ANN

How should I know?

THE PRIEST

Don't you know what he would say?

ANN

Oh, nothing. Only a little thing, but it makes me happy.

THE PRIEST

Will you tell me?

ANN

He will say he missed me to-day.

THE PRIEST

You poor child! (*They are silent for a moment. Then she comes down from the step on to the pavement and turns impulsively to him.*)

ANN

Father, I want you to forgive me. I thought all priests were alike. You asked my age. I am twenty-six—two years older than Fred. I know you mean to do the right thing by us. (*They both turn, unconsciously, it may be, and look at the lighted window. She puts out her hand into the rays of light that fall from it. The priest remains silent.*)

ANN

I will think this over and perhaps— (*turning into the house*) Good-night. (*He stands for a moment, looking after her deeply moved and takes a few steps away, but comes back suddenly and speaks to her by her name.*)

THE PRIEST

Ann—

ANN

(*Turning back to the threshold*) Yes; you called me? Yes?

THE PRIEST

Ann, I want you to forget what I have said.

ANN

But, Father—

THE PRIEST

I can't advise you in this case. I came here like a fool, thinking I knew all about things, and I find I know nothing at all—nothing.

ANN

Oh, that's just it—if things were only one thing or another—good, bad, anything, so long as it's one thing; but so many sides to everything and everything jumbled up! If only I were what you took me for—just a poor, rotten girl!

THE PRIEST

No, no, child. You can't throw away what God has given you—

ANN

(*In a dull, hopeless voice*) And yet, sooner or later, as you said—oh, this is not the first time I have thought of all this.

THE PRIEST

No, no; forget what I have said. You must settle it. The trouble is, I'm an old man and a priest. Good-night. (*He holds out his hand and turns to go*) Good-night.

ANN

(*She takes no notice of his hand*) But, Father, do you think she loves him?

THE PRIEST

She could never love him as you do.

ANN

But she would love him?

THE PRIEST

I don't believe it's in her nature to care so much. She is so much—slighter.

ANN

Do you think for me Fred could—care so much —as I do? That he does?

THE PRIEST

I don't know—not as I have known him. I don't know what he may be when he is with you. Dear me, I really must be going. Good-night. (*He hurries away.*)

(*She stands with one hand on the doorpost, watching him as he disappears into the shadow of the street. You can hear his footsteps far off. She makes a certain gesture in his direction, but checks herself. It is all hopeless. She shakes her head slowly and in despair. Her hand slips down to her side. She turns slowly into the house and closes the door behind her. A moment later the light in the window is put out. The lamp shines dimly along the deserted street.*)

CURTAIN

ADDIO

CHARACTERS

MONKEY TOM

HARRY BOYD

JOHN

SUSA

ADDIO

The room in John's place looks out through a sort of triple door, or French windows, all open, into an arcade with columns of old brick and plaster. In the street outside the last of the afterglow shines. A few street cries are heard, but they, too, are going like the daylight. The high walls, with traces of decoration still on them, show that the old room has seen better days, when New Orleans was a part of France and the Cathedral was the heart of the town. Showcases with bread and cakes stretch across the back of the shop. John has put some paper flowers among the loaves, and on one of the cases a vase of these flowers and some palmetto fans. Opposite the door are the entrances to the kitchen and two or three tables.

John stands behind a showcase sorting loaves of bread and humming to himself. He is a big, ruddy, middle-aged fellow and speaks with a lazy, good-hearted drawl.

Harry enters, fanning himself with his hat.

JOHN

Hello, Harry! How's your character? You're looking dapper enough. Yais, ain't it hot!

HARRY

Zat you, John? How goes it, John? I say, how long is Canal Street, anyway? And then if you stop at Raynor's—what time is it? (*He sits down by a table to the right.*)

JOHN

'Bout six, I reckon.

HARRY
Just six? Lucky dog!

JOHN
Supper time in the world, all right.

HARRY
What time do you have supper?

JOHN
Oh, generally 'bout six, I reckon; 'long there.

HARRY
What time d'you say it was?

JOHN
'Bout six. Got some fine crabs to-day. From the island; reckon these Cajons are poaching for 'em; but they're fine crabs now—yes, sirree, they are—fine ones.

HARRY
What time is it, now, John?

JOHN
Good Lord, I'll put in a clock! It's five after six. Catchin' a train?

HARRY
Promised to meet Susa here at six.

JOHN
Susa? Oh, ho! And how is Susa? I haven't seen her for weeks.

HARRY
Straight and quick as ever. That girl's got spirit. I got a little roan from Kentucky, same spirit—damn me!—you oughter seen her, John, when the oyster chap—you know Fernandez—

dirty sliver—well, he asked her for a kiss yesterday. She smacked him so hard everybody in the market jumped. "Say, Dollie, give me a kiss," he says. "Give you a smack," she says. And old Potted Plants, when she heard it, yells out, "Holy Virgin! Who knocked it off?" She was noddin', you see. (*Harry sits down by one of the tables. John chuckles as he drifts about the place.*)

JOHN

Susa's all right!

HARRY

Yes, Susa'll come out all right, but—

JOHN

I used to see Susa passin' here, walkin' down the banquette with her head in the air—and those there young chaps along behind, but she'd go by herself, she would.

HARRY

I used to be one of 'em. I'd hang round, but she wouldn't see me. Sometimes I'd try to speak to her, but she'd give me such a look my knees were water. She wouldn't see any of us chaps at first. Not for a long time.

JOHN

Aw well, who knows? Women's eyes are different, maybe. But I ain't seen Susa pass by here in a long time.

HARRY

No; you see they've moved. Gone over to Esplanade, near Pacco's.

JOHN

Good-night! Some style! She and her ma still at the market?

HARRY

Yes, at her mother's stand—the blue stand next to the oysters. But I reckon business is pretty slow for 'em.

JOHN

A pretty girl like that oughtn't to have no business but a husband. And how is your business?

HARRY

Booming, John. By George, if I'm not making fifty dollars a week with my teams now, clear!

JOHN

Fifty dollars! Say! Why—then you can marry! Easy as fallin' off a log.

HARRY

If Susa will only say the word, I'm ready for it! She seems to love me sometimes, John, and sometimes she doesn't.

JOHN

'At's a' right. They're all that way. Sometimes they do and they don't, and sometimes they don't and they do.

HARRY

She had a sweetheart in Sicily once, and I think she remembers him sometimes; but then—

JOHN

Aw naw; she's forgotten him.

HARRY

I don't know; you can't tell about these things.

I ask her sometimes if she loves me, John, and she just stands there looking at the oranges. I asked her, I says, "Susa, do you love me?" and she picks up an orange and says, "You oughter see the oranges in Palermo." "But don't you love me now," I says, and she says—

JOHN

Listen, Harry, they kin forget. I'm a married man, and I know. My wife's done forgot all those other fellows—every mother's son of 'em.

HARRY

Has she?

JOHN

She's about forgot me, too, I reckon. (*A long pause. John goes on with some business about the showcases. Harry lights a cigarette and begins to smoke impatiently. Tommaso's hand-organ is heard outside playing the "Merry Widow Waltz."*)

JOHN

Pst! Listen, there's Monkey Tom—

HARRY

Who?

JOHN

Monkey Tom; here he is. (*John goes and stands in the door, speaking to someone outside*) 'S 'at you, Tom?

TOMMASO

Buon giorno, Signore—howdy!

JOHN

Well—hello, Tom! Don't he speak English now? (*Tommaso enters from the street, carrying*

by a strap his organ, which is supported from beneath by a pole. He is a young man of twenty-four, but his lameness makes him look far older.)

JOHN

Mr. Boyd, Signor Tommaso.

HARRY

Howdy; how are you, Signore? (*Tommaso bows. Then he sets down the organ, half leaning on it.*)

JOHN

How's this for weather, Tom? Nearly as hot as Sicily, eh?

TOMMASO

Sicilia, that is not hot!

JOHN

Not hot? Now, Harry, I ask you what about a country where the whole island is a cook-oven?

TOMMASO

Oh, dio santo, Signore! (*Harry laughs.*)

TOMMASO

In Sicilia—ah, Signore, I see you make 'a me fun.

JOHN

All right, Tom. You want your bread and the cake for Gigia, eh?

HARRY

Does he buy cake for the monkey?

TOMMASO

How Gigia love de cake!

JOHN

Harry, you saw Gigia dance, yes?

HARRY

(*Shaking his head*) No, never did. Seen Bessie Bliss.

TOMMASO

You got a monkey, too, Signore? (*John gives a chuckle.*)

TOMMASO

(*Solemnly*) Oh, a lady—scusi, Signore.

HARRY (*Smiling over the lady idea*)

If you like.

JOHN

(*Bringing out a tray*) Aye, aye, what do you think of this?

TOMMASO

No, no cake to-day, Signore. Gigia, Gigia's dead —dieda last night—poor Gigia—all I had!

JOHN

Dead? Aw now, come along! Cheer up; some people ain't never had a monkey. And you'll pick up less money, but you'll need less to buy. What's the bread, long or short? To-day's or yesterday's? To-days 5 cents; yesterday's 2 cents.

TOMMASO

Short; and dat's too mucha wivout Gigia.

JOHN

Yesterday's?

TOMMASO

Si, si, I no lika to-day's bread. It is too—too—

JOHN

Hot? Yais, yais, I see—(*laughing*) I see, Tommie. To-day's bread's too hot, yes. Yesterday's, well, yon 'tis.

HARRY

How do you like America, Tom?

TOMMASO

Me? Oh, I no like America, Signore. Fast, so fasta! I say, "Permesso, Signore,"—he say, "Git out a de way!" (*He comes down to the front*) I work all week, and den Sunday comes, domenico—ai, ai, ai, no festa, no wine—no—oh no!

HARRY

How long have you been over?

TOMMASO

Two year and half. Longa time, Signore!

HARRY

Played the organ all the time, eh? Made any money?

TOMMASO

Si, si, but only little, poco, poco, Signore—pocino, Signore. You see, Signore, I lame and weaka—

JOHN

Aw, come on now, Tom's gettin' rich! (*He finds his wire brush and stands guard over the case of bread.*)

TOMMASO

No, no!

HARRY
Why do you stay then, if you make no money?

TOMMASO
Ah, Signore, I no come for money.

JOHN
Aw, shucks, what then? (*Striking at a fly*) For love? For love, oh la, la!

TOMMASO
(*Excitedly*) Listen, Signore—me—I lookinga for someone.

HARRY
Well, get that, will you! A vendetta, eh? to kill?

TOMMASO
No, Signore, not kill.

HARRY
No?

TOMMASO
To love—to love, Signore, si.

HARRY
A woman?

TOMMASO
Si, (*with a shrug*) altro. Si, Signore.

JOHN
Aye!—(*He hits hard and gets his fly*)—these women!

HARRY
And have you found her?

TOMMASO
Found her? No, Signore, mai. Mai, Signore. Never found.

HARRY

Yes, America's a big place, ain't it, Tom? Oh, well, there're other fish in the sea.

TOMMASO

Scusi, Signore?

HARRY

I say this is not the only woman in the world. There're other—

TOMMASO

No, Signore, I no think.

HARRY

Eh?

SUSA

(*Outside*) Eh, Pietro, ecco! Domani due kili! E cirassi— (*At the sound of her voice Tommaso starts violently, and, as she enters, retreats to the rear of the shop.*)

A MAN'S VOICE

(*From the street*) Si, si, ho capito, domani mattina a buon ora.

SUSA

(*In the door*) Allora, senza mancanza, va bene. (*She enters hastily and angrily.*)

HARRY

(*Going towards her*) Susa! Why I thought you had forgotten!

SUSA

(*Motioning him back from her*) Forgotten—io —I?

HARRY

Why!

SUSA

You have forgotten! You say you come for me by the market—and I—(*half sobbing*) I wait, waita till everyone go away—waita, wait, wait, and I was afraid—and so—so I come—epoi, senta, listen—

HARRY

No, no, Susa, I'm sorry. You got it wrong. I said I'd meet you here at John's. (*She turns her back on him*) Why, you're not mad, are you? Are you, Susa? (*Tommaso meantime at the back has left his organ propped against the showcase, and stares at Susa with wild, eager, large eyes.*)

HARRY

Are you angry, Susa?

TOMMASO

(*Under his breath*) Susa—oh!

HARRY

Susa, it wasn't my fault.

SUSA

Oh, basta, basta, it's a lie!

JOHN

Oh, Lord, these lovers and loveresses! And this love! Give me the oven for mine! Come, come, don't you all be scrappin'—I've got a nice supper for you—all hot.

TOMMASO

(*At the back, stretching out his hands to her and speaking to himself*) Susa, Susa, Susa!

HARRY

(*By the table on the right*) Come, Susa, you're wrong! (*She stamps her foot*) Come, let's eat a bite. All right, John, let's have your feast. (*Susa stands with her back to him, without moving. Harry takes off his hat, hangs it on the chair back, and straightens his tie. Tommaso at the back looks steadily at Harry, studying him from head to foot, then at himself; back to Harry, then at himself again, and down at his crippled leg, and shakes his head.*)

HARRY

(*Reminding him*) John—

JOHN

(*Going out*) All rightsky, zwei minute! (*John goes out. Tommaso puts on his hat, pulls it down over his eyes, and walks over toward the organ.*)

SUSA

I won't eat any supper!

HARRY

Why, Susa, you ain't really mad, are you? Oh, come now, honest, I said I'd wait here.

SUSA

It's a lie—you dodged me—you lie to me—oh—Posse mori a ches! I hate you.

(*John comes in with a tray of plates.*

JOHN

All rightsky—better'n the fat o' rams!—waffles, crab gumbo à la— (*Susa moves toward the door*) Hello, where you goin'? Ain't you goin' to eat anything?

SUSA

I'm a goin' home.

JOHN

Home!

HARRY

Susa, you don't mean it! Then I'll go, too.

SUSA

No, sacramento, mai—never—e senta, senta, Harry, listen! Don't you come near me again —don't touch me—or—or I'll kill you, briconaccio—leave me be! And I'll go to Napoli again, my country; I hate you Americani, cold fish! I'm disgoosted and disgraced! (*She thrusts him aside and starts toward the door.*)

JOHN

Susa! Oh, now! Now, Susa!

SUSA

(*Stopping for a moment*) Oh, you! basta! (*She clasps her palms together*)

HARRY

Susa—

SUSA

Accidente!

TOMMASO

No, no! (*He moves quickly in front of her and stands across the door, his hat still down over his eyes*) No, no, you musta no go. You too quicka—

SUSA

Che, che? Who's goin' stop me? Let me pass!

TOMMASO

You are too quicka, Signora—non c'è de l'amor —no mucha love—no any place—don'ta throw it away—don't throw it away. Pardone—be gentile—

SUSA

I'll show you how to move!

TOMMASO

(*His manner gathering force as he stops her with his hand outstretched*) Aspetti, wait, waita, wait till you hear—

SUSA

Hear what? John, he's crazy!

TOMMASO

There was a man in my country—Italia— (*He pauses. They all grow quiet to listen. Susa moves a step backward.*)

SUSA

Well? Epoi?

TOMMASO

(*Speaking very slowly at first*) who love a woman —anda she loveda him. And one other personne made lies to them. And she taka and crede the lies—and leave him and go to America —epoi—and so—dey lose each oder.

JOHN

Why man— (*Susa comes down nearer the table on the right and stands looking into space, clasping and unclasping her hands. Harry watches her anxiously.*)

JOHN

(*Speaking low to Tommaso*) Why, man, I see—I see—take her—speak! You take what's yours!

TOMMASO (*almost in a whisper*)

La mia—mia fanciulla—Susa—allora perche—Signor? why? Oh no—

JOHN

Sure, sure, Tom— (*Tommaso looks at Harry, then at himself; then points to his crippled leg, and shakes his head.*)

HARRY

Sure—fight for your rights—speak up!

TOMMASO

Shh! Hush, Signore, hush!

SUSA

(*Raising her head and looking at no one*) Well? —che ha fatto? What did he do? What dida that man do?

TOMMASO

What do? (*He makes a little gesture of putting his hand to his eyes for a second*) Piange. She go to America, and he cry and cry for her, but never, never found—

SUSA

And then? And then?

TOMMASO

And then the fever take him and molto miseria—

SUSA

And did—and did he follow her?

TOMMASO

Si, when he was well—longa tim' after—to America.

SUSA

And found?

TOMMASO

Mai. And never found. (*John makes an impatient step forward.*)

SUSA

(*Whispering as to herself*) Ah, never? Madonna! Never?

TOMMASO

But if she hadna been so quicka, so fast, so angry—dey had not lost each oder.

SUSA

No, maybe not. (*She is silent for some time, working her hands together. Her voice changes entirely when she speaks*) Oh, no, no! Eh, altro! Someone tells you this, in the markette maybe.

TOMMASO

The Mercato—no, Signora—no.

SUSA

(*She faces him as she speaks; he stands with his hat still down over his eyes*) Ma che, tell me—what was his name? What was this man's name?

TOMMASO

Tommaso. (*John and Harry look at each other, but remain as they were standing.*)

SUSA

(*Taking a step toward him*) Tommaso? Tommaso?

TOMMASO

Si, Tommaso.

SUSA

How did you know? Tommaso! That was his name? You say? What do you say?

TOMMASO

I speaka to make you not to leave your man, there— (*He fumbles at his hat, pushing it at last further down to shadow his face.*)

SUSA

But you—but you—what is your name?

TOMMASO

(*Slowly, with a great effort*) My name? Luigi—is my name. (*Harry and John look suddenly at one another, but seem unable to act.*)

HARRY

Why—why—you will not—? (*Susa snaps her fingers at Harry to silence him.*)

TOMMASO

(*In a firm voice*) Luigi.

SUSA

(*She unclasps her hands and waits a little before speaking again*) But—how did you know the storia?

TOMMASO

How did I know? I see it in the play at—Pisa. You see, Signora, it was a very grand teatro—you see, Signora—I say a play—there was—

you see, Signora—when they loved each oder, eh, you see, Signora, that night— (*He limps a step nearer her. Susa looks athim a moment, gives a sudden start, and shivers, then turns away, slapping her hand on the table and leaning against it. She has decided not to recognize Tommaso.*)

SUSA

Oh dio, I was a fool to think that— My Tommaso—

JOHN

Oh, Susa!

TOMMASO

No broka like me, eh? Your Tommaso, no—no like— (*touching his breast*)—me. (*He pauses*) In the play at Roma—at Pisa, Signora —Allora—I go. Ricorda, Signora—

JOHN

Stay, stay. Tommaso—Luigi—old chap—and take some supper with me; it won't cost you nothin'—I invite you!

TOMMASO

No, I no eat. I am a little seeka to-day. I think I joosta taka de bread. (*Susa stands near the table, looking at the floor, struggling to master herself. She has forgotten the three men. After a while she shakes her head and throws out her hands in a little hopeless gesture, then stands quite still.*)

HARRY

Susa!

SUSA

Oh, wait! Please, wait! (*The three men stand watching her. Harry still seated on the far side of the table. Tommaso at length raises his hat from his face and takes one long look at her. Then he goes back and puts the strap over his shoulder, and then leans suddenly against the organ and buries his face in his arms.*)

JOHN

Hey, kiddo!

TOMMASO

(*Rousing gaily and striking up the waltz*) Si, si, addio! Where's Gigia? Addio. Goodabye—(*Outside*)—goodabye!

JOHN

Good-bye.

SUSA

Good-bye—Luigi. (*She stands motionless, resting one hand on the table. Harry has risen from his chair and stands, waiting, doing nothing. The organ plays farther and farther away.*)

JOHN

Oh! his bread! (*He takes up the bread that Tommaso has left and starts after him, stops, puts the bread back on the showcase, and without turning wipes his eyes on his sleeve.*)

SUSA

Harry—

HARRY

Yes?

SUSA

Scusi—I'm sorry. (*Without turning, she holds out her hand to him. The strains of the waltz die away in a far-off street.*)

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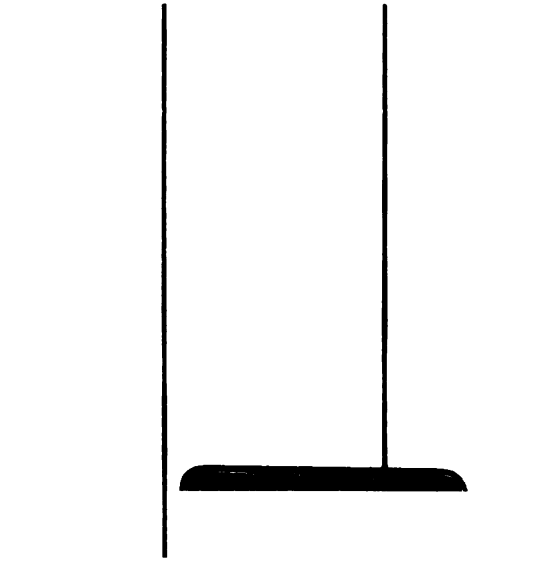
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